

# Cymbeline XXI: A Rehearsal

Marcos Barbosa

*English Version by Fernanda Sampaio*

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This play was written for specially for the schools participating in the  
**Conexões Youth Theatre Project Brazil**  
and it was part of its portfolio in 2014.  
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be negotiated with the writer's agent.

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Realização



## Characters

Cymbeline

*King of Britain*

Imogen

*Cymbeline's daughter*

Posthumus

*Imogen's husband*

Cloten

*the King's stepson*

Iachimo

*an Italian*

Director

Actors/Actresses

This is a play within a play. In *Cymbeline XXI: a Rehearsal*, an amateur theatre group get together to stage William Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*.

When Shakespeare's play is on, the text will use the names of the characters in *Cymbeline* (Cymbeline, Posthumus, Iachimo etc.). The actors can switch roles and it's not necessary that only men play the male roles and women the female roles.

When the amateur group rehearsal of *Cymbeline* is on, the characters are: the Director, the actors (often without individual role assignment so that different lines may be distributed among the cast) in addition to the actor or actress who is, at that moment, playing one of Shakespeare's characters (Actor/Actress/ Imogen, Actor/Actress/Cloten etc.).

The result is a great jigsaw game that each group will assemble as they find more convenient.

## Prologue

The actors –

O for a Muse of Fire, that would ascend

The brightest Heaven of Invention:

A Kingdome for a Stage, Princes to Act,

And Monarchs to behold the swelling Scene.

Then should the Warlike Harry, like himself,

Assume the Port of Mars, and at his heels

Leasht in, like Hounds should Famine, Sword, and Fire

Crouch for employment. But pardon, Gentles all:

The flat unraised Spirits, that hath dar'd,

On this unworthy Scaffold, to bring forth

So great an Object. Can this Cock-Pit hold

The vast fields of France? Or may we cram

Within this Wooden O. the very Casks

That did affright the air at Agincourt?

O pardon: since a crooked Figure may

Attest in little place a Million,

And let us, Cyphers to this great account,

On your imaginary Forces work.

Suppose within the Girdle of these Walls

Are now confin'd two mighty Monarchies,

Whose high, up-reared, and abutting Fronts,

The perillous narrow Ocean parts asunder.

Peace out our imperfections with your thoughts:

Into a thousand parts divide one Man,

And make imaginary Puissance.

Think when we talk of Horses, that you see them

Printing their proud Hoofs i'th' receiving Earth:

For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our Kings,

Carry them here and there: jumping over Times;

Turning th'accomplishment of many years

Into an Hour-glass: for the which supply,

Admit me Chorus to this History;

Who Prologue-like, your humble patience pray,

Gently to hear, kindly to judge our day.

Director (*corrects*) – “Play!”

*The cast stares at the director, not really understanding the meaning of the correction.*

Director – Someone said “day” instead of “play”. The line is “Gently to hear,

kindly to judge our play.”

– Same difference...

Director – Of course there's a difference. A play is a play and a day is a day.

– No one will understand anything, let alone mind if we say “day” or “play”.

Director – If you can't understand anything, that's your fault. But the audience,

unlike the cast, is not stupid.

– Man...

– No need to be mean.

Director – What is there to not understand? (*He explains*) The king's daughter

secretly married a young man who is not a nobleman, despised a prince who

wanted to marry her and the outraged king told the same young man to leave the kingdom.

– Then why don't we just say it like that?

Director – Like what?

– Like that. *(He shows how the chorus should open the show)* “The king's daughter secretly marries a poor boy, dumps a rich playboy prince and her father decides to end the day, I mean, to start the play.”

– I like that.

Director – You're kidding me, right?

*The cast exchange glances.*

Director – Do you know how long ago this play was written? Over four hundred years ago! And do you further know why it still interests people? Because instead of spitting the words out the way you just did, the author minded what he was writing.

– But couldn't he have minded more easily?

– Well... why does everything have to be easy for you?

– And why does everything have to be hard with you. Isn't it enough that you are difficult?

*The cast break apart what might easily turn into a fight.*

Director – Not hard or easy. What we want here is to enrapture the audience's heart. Sometimes one needs to take the long way to get to people's hearts. This is when we make a deal with those watching our play. If we strike that deal, people will actually understand. Let's start at the end of the Prologue, shall we?

*The cast gets settled to present the Prologue*

Director – OK.

The actors –

Into an Hour-glass: for the which supply,

Admit me Chorus to this History;

Who Prologue-like, your humble patience pray,

Gently to hear, kindly to judge our play.

– So?

Director – Much better. If we go on like this, our “play” may very well win the “day”.

*The cast congratulate each other.*

Director – Scene 1!

*The cast gets settled to present Scene 1.*

### **1. Imogen’s bedroom, in King Cymbeline’s castle.**

*In bed, Posthumus sings to Imogen, who’s still sleeping.*

Posthumus –

Hark, hark!

the lark at heaven’s gate sings,

And Phoebus ‘gins arise,

His steeds to water at those springs

On chaliced flowers that lies;

And winking Mary-buds begin

To open their golden eyes:

With everything that pretty is,

My lady sweet, arise:

Arise, arise!

*Imogen awakens and smiles to Posthumus.*

Posthumus –

Should we be taking leave

As long a term as yet we have to live,

The loathness to depart would grow. Adieu!

*Posthumus kisses Imogen and gets ready to leave.*

Imogen –

Nay, stay a little:

Were you but riding forth to air yourself,

Such parting were too petty. Look here, love.

*Imogen offers a ring to Posthumus.*

Imogen –

This diamond was my mother's: take it, heart;

But keep it till you woo another wife,

When Imogen is dead.

Posthumus –

How, how! another?

You gentle gods, give me but this I have,

And sear up my embraces from a next

With bonds of death!

*Putting on the ring and observing her in awe.*

Posthumus –

Remain, remain thou here

While sense can keep it on.

*Imogen and Posthumus kiss.*

Posthumus –

And, sweetest, fai rest,  
As I my poor self did exchange for you,  
To your so infinite loss, so in our trifles  
I still win of you : for my sake wear this;  
It is a manacle of love; I'll place it  
Upon this fairest prisoner.

*Putting a bracelet upon her arm, they kiss. Enter Cymbeline and Lords. Imogen and Posthumus are frightened. She places herself between Posthumus and her father.*

Cymbeline –

Thou basest thing, avoid! hence, from my sight!  
If after this command thou fraught the court  
With thy unworthiness, thou diest: away!  
Thou'rt poison to my blood!

Imogen –

I beseech you, sir ,  
Harm not yourself with your vexation.

Cymbeline –

O disloyal thing,  
That shouldst repair my youth, thou heap'st  
A year's age on me .  
Thou took'st a beggar; wouldst have made my throne  
A seat for baseness.

Imogen –

No; I rather added  
A lustre to it.



Cymbeline –

O thou vile one!

Imogen –

It is your fault that I have loved Posthumus.

You bred him as my playfellow, and he is

A man worth any wo man, overbuys me

Almost the sum he pays.

Cymbeline –

What?

Art thou mad?

Posthumus –

Please your highness,

I will from hence to-day...

*Cymbeline intends to reply but is preceded by Cloten,*

*as he enters and, in an outburst, attacks Posthumus violently.*

Cloten –

Whoreson dog!

*Cloten and Posthumus fight. Imogen tries to help Posthumus,*

*but Cymbeline stops her, holding her back.*

*Posthumus is clearly stronger and overtakes Cloten, on the ground.*

*Posthumus will punch Cloten, but Imogen sets herself free from*

*Cymbeline and succeeds in stopping Posthumus before.*

Imogen –

Peace, peace!

*Cymbeline pulls Imogen away from Posthumus, she tries to free herself from her father,*

*but Cymbeline refrains her. Posthumus leaves Cloten on the ground and signals to*

*Imogen*

*to calm down. The situation is under control again. Posthumus talks to Imogen.*

Posthumus –

The gods protect you!

I am gone.

*Posthumus looks at Imogen, kisses the ring and exits. Imogen falls on her knees.*

Imogen –

O the gods!

When shall we see again?

There cannot be a pinch in death

More sharp than this is.

Cymbeline –

Thou foolish thing!

*Exits Cymbeline, taking Imogen with him. Actor/Actress/Cloten interrupts the rehearsal.*

Actor/Actress/Cloten – Director? –

Director – What?

Actor/Actress/Cloten – One question: on the play itself, will I really say that?

Director – Say what?

*Actor/Actress/Cloten is a little embarrassed to answer.*

Director – Spit it out, man.

*Actor/Actress/Cloten goes to Director and says it at his ear.*

Director – “Whoreson dog?” Of course you will.

Actor/Actress/Cloten – But aren’t we supposed to be doing Shakespeare?

Director – But it is Shakespeare.

Actor/Actress/Cloten – Real Shakespeare?

Director – Real, yes, of course!

– I’m beginning to like him more.

– Me too.

– No kidding. A line like that, even I could write that.

– I’ll post a picture of his on Facebook just like this: “Whoreson dog!” Signed:

William Shakespeare.

*The cast laughs.*

Director – Shakespeare wrote such beautiful lines and you will pick that one to post on Facebook?

– Don’t you like it? All complaints to be taken with Shakespeare!

*The cast laughs.*

Director – I’ll give you another suggestion.

– There he comes.

– OK. What’s the suggestion?

Director – “The fool’s blind stupidity sharpens a wise man’s reason!” Signed:

William Shakespeare.

*The cast laughs even more. The actor/actress is off ended and is thinking of retorting, but the Director pushes rehearsal on.*

Director – Bar scene!

– Who will play Posthumus in this scene?

– Can I do it?

Director – OK. But mind you don’t mock the character. He is a *bit* tipsy, not *dead drunk*.

– No sweat.

– I’ll do Iachimo, then!

Director – OK. But don’t overdo the Italian accent.

– The guy is Italian!

Director – Don’t start! Scene two!

*The cast gets ready for scene 2.*

## **2. A bar, in Italy.**

*Enter Iachimo and a slightly drunk Posthumus.*

*Iachimo seems to be pulling Posthumus away from a fight.*

Iachimo –

I was glad I did atone my count ryman and you; it had been  
pity you should have be en put together with so mortal  
a purpose, [...] upon importance of so  
slight and trivial a nature.

Posthumus –

By your pardon, sir ,

But my quarrel was not

altogether slight.

Iachimo –

Vouching – and upon

warrant of bloody affirmation – Imog en to be more fair,

virtuous, wise, chaste, constant-qu alified and less

attemtable than any the rarest of our ladies...

You must not so far prefer her ‘fore ours of Italy.

That lady is not now living, or this gentleman’s

opinion by this worn out.

Posthumus –

She holds her virtue still and I my mind.

*Iachimo points to a diamond in Posthumus' hand.*

Iachimo –

If she went before others I have

seen, as that diamond of yours outlustres many I have

beheld. I could not but believe she excelled many: but

I have not seen the most precious diamond that is, nor

you the lady.

Posthumus –

I praised her as I rated her: so do I my stone.

*Iachimo examines the diamond on Posthumus's ring.*

Iachimo –

What do you esteem it at?

Posthumus –

More than the world enjoys.

Iachimo –

Either your unparagoned mistress is dead, or she's outprized by a trifle.

Posthumus –

You are mistaken.

*Points to the diamond.*

Posthumus –

the one may be sold, or

given, if there were wealth enough for the purchase

or merit for the gift: the other is not a thing for sale

and only the gift of the gods.

Iachimo –

You may wear her in title yours: but, you know,  
strange fowl light upon neighbouring ponds. Your ring  
may be stolen too.

Posthumus –

Your Italy contains none so accomplished a  
Courtier to convince the hon our of my mistress,  
I do nothing doubt you h ave store of thieves;  
notwithstanding, I fear not my ring.

Iachimo –

Sir, with all my heart.

With five times so much conversation, I should  
get ground of your fair mistress,  
had I admittance a nd opportunity  
to friend.

*Posthumus holds Iachimo by the shirt. Iachimo appears undisturbed.*

Iachimo –

I dare thereupon pa wn the moiety of my estate  
to your ring,  
I make my wager ra ther against your  
confidence than her reputation.

*Posthumus lets go of Iachimo. Still seemingly cool and unshaken, Iachimo fi xes his shirt.*

Posthumus –

You are a great dea I abused in too bold a

persuasion; and I doubt not you sustain what you're  
worthy of by your attempt.

Iachimo –

What's that?

Posthumus –

A repulse: though by your attempt, as you call  
it, deserve more; a punishment too.

Iachimo –

I will lay you ten thousand ducats to your ring,  
that, commend me to the court where your lady is,  
with no more advantage than the opportunity of a  
second conference, and I will bring from thence that  
honour of hers which you imagine so reserved.

*Posthumus hesitates.*

Posthumus –

I will wage against your gold, gold to it: my  
ring I hold dear as my finger; 'tis part of it.

Iachimo –

You are afraid, and therein the wiser...

*Iachimo laughs at Posthumus' hesitation. Posthumus yields at last.*

Posthumus –

I shall but lend my diamond till  
your return:

My mistress exceeds in goodness the hugeness of your  
unworthy thinking: I dare you to this match: here's

my ring.

*Posthumus hands the ring to Iachimo, who admires the diamond's beauty.*

Iachimo –

If I bring you no sufficient

testimony that I have enjoyed the dearest bodily part

of your mistress, my ten thousand ducats are yours;

so is your diamond too: if I come off, and leave her in

such honour as you have trust in, she your jewel, this

your jewel, and my gold are yours.

Posthumus –

If you make

your voyage upon her and give me directly to

understand you have prevailed, I am no further your

enemy; she is not worth our debate: if she remain

unseduced, you not making it appear otherwise, for

your ill opinion and the assault you have made to her

chastity you shall answer me with your sword.

*Iachimo reaches his hand out to Posthumus.*

*Actor/Actress/Posthumus hesitates.*

Director – What's happened?

*Actor/Actress/Iachimo signals for the Actor/Actress/*

*Posthumus to shake hands on their agreement.*

Actor/Actress/Posthumus – I'm not shaking on that.

Actor/Actress/Iachimo – Is my hand dirty?

Actor/Actress/Posthumus – That's not it. It's just that it makes no sense at all.



Director – What makes no sense?

Actor/Actress/Posthumus. Posthumus wouldn't make a crazy bet like that. Can you imagine? To run the risk of becoming a cuckold and on top of that help the guy who will come on to his wife?

Director – Well, he is sure he won't be a cuckold.

Actor/Actress/Posthumus. Is that a reason to throw his wife in the fire?

Director – Yes.

Actor/Actress/Posthumus. It makes no sense.

– I agree!

Director – Posthumus is in love and he is away from the woman who is life itself to him.

Actor/Actress/Posthumus. So?

Director – Have you ever been in love?

*Beat. Actor/Actress/Posthumus nods.*

Director – Real love? The real deal? The one that hurts?

*Beat. Actor/Actress/Posthumus nods.*

Director – And when you were in love, did you ever screw up? Big time? The type that you pray god will turn back time so you can fix it?

*Pause. Actor/Actress/Posthumus doesn't answer.*

Director – Now imagine going through that and your sweetheart is in a different country, and you have no father, no mother, no friend to give you a helping hand?

*Pause. Actor/Actress/Posthumus says nothing.*

Director – You get it now?

*Actor/Actress/Posthumus returns to the role, now with full conviction.*

Posthumus –

If you make  
your voyage upon her and give me directly to  
understand you have prevailed, I am no further your  
enemy; she is not worth our debate: if she remain  
unseduced, you not making it appear otherwise, for  
your ill opinion and the assault you have made to her  
chastity you shall answer me with your sword.

*Iachimo reaches his hand out to Posthumus. Posthumus shakes hands on the bet.*

Director – Excellent!

Actor/Actress/Posthumus. I hate Shakespeare!

*Everyone laughs.*

*The cast gets ready for scene 3.*

### **3. At King Cymbeline's castle.**

*Imogen reads, alone. Iachimo approaches and observes her from afar.*

*Iachimo goes to Imogen.*

Iachimo –

Madam.

*Imogen startles, but Iachimo eases her mind and presents her with a letter.*

*Imogen looks at the letter. Her face fills with happiness.*

Imogen –

A noble gentleman of Rome,

Comes from my lord with letters.

Iachimo –

The worthy Posthumus is in safety

And greets your highness dearly.

Imogen –

Thanks, good sir:

You're kindly welcome.

In all that I can do .

Iachimo –

Thanks, fairest lady.

*Iachimo looks at Imogen.*

Imogen –

What makes your admiration?

Iachimo –

What, are men mad? Hath nature given them eyes

To see this vaulted arch, and the rich crop

Of sea and land, which can distinguish 'twixt

The fiery orbs above and the twinn'd stones

Upon the number'd benches? and can we not

Partition make with spectacles so precious

'Twixt fair and foul ?

Imogen –

What, dear sir?

Continue well my lord?

His health, beseech you?

Iachimo –

Well, madam.

Imogen –

Is he disposed to mirth? I hope he is.

Iachimo –

Exceeding pleasant; none a stranger there

So merry and so game some: he is call'd

The Briton reveller!

*Imogen is astonished at Iachimo's comment, but pretends not to notice it.*

Imogen –

When he was here,

He did incline to sadness, and oft-times

Not knowing why.

Iachimo –

I never saw him sad.

Imogen –

I pray you, sir, Deliver with more openness your answers  
To my demands.

You do seem to know

Something of me, or what concerns me.

*Iachimo takes Imogen's hands in his.*

Iachimo –

O dearest soul! your cause doth strike my heart

With pity, that doth make me sick. A lady

So fair, and fasten'd to an empery,

Would make the great 'st king double, – to be partner'd

With tomboys hired with that self-exhibition

Which your own coffers yield! with diseased ventures

That play with all infirmities for gold!

Imogen –

Let me hear no more.

*Imogen tries to control herself, but she can't hold back the tears.*

*Iachimo moves toward Imogen, offers her a handkerchief. She takes it.*

*When Iachimo finds the room, he offers his shoulder for Imogen to rest her head on.*

Iachimo –

Had I this cheek

To bathe my lips upon; this hand, whose touch,

Whose every touch, would force the feeler's soul

To the oath of loyalty; this object, which

Takes prisoner the wild motion of mine eye,

Fixing it only here; should I, damn'd then,

Slaver with lips as common as the stairs

That mount the Capitol.

*Iachimo looks into Imogen's eyes.*

Iachimo –

Be revenged!

Imogen –

Revenged!

How should I be revenged? If this be true,--

How should I be revenged?

Imogen –

I dedicate myself to your sweet pleasure.

*Imogen is frightened and moves away from Iachimo. Iachimo again moves closer to her.*

Iachimo –

More noble than that runagate to your bed,

And will continue fast to your affection,

Still close as sure.

Imogen –

What?

Iachimo –

*Let me my service tender on your lips.*

*Iachimo tries to kiss Imogen. Imogen pushes him away.*

Imogen –

Away! I do condemn mine ears that have

So long attended thee. If thou wert honourable,

Thou wouldst have told this tale for virtue, not

For such an end thou seek'st,--as base as strange.

Thou wrong'st a gentleman, who is as far

From thy report as thou from honour, and

Solicit'st here a lady that disdains

Thee and the devil alike.

The king my father's hall be made acquainted

Of thy assault.

*Iachimo is not shaken by Imogen's words and suddenly changes his tune.*

Iachimo –

Give me your pardon.

Most mighty princess, that I have adventured

To try your taking a false report; which hath

Honour'd with confirmation your great judgment

In the election of a sir so rare,

Which you know cannot err: the love I bare him

Made me to fan you thus.

I have spoke this, to know if your affiance

Were deeply rooted.

*Imogen hesitates, Iachimo keels down before her.*

Iachimo –

Pray, your pardon.

Imogen –

You make amends.

All 's well, sir.

*Imogen exits. Iachimo speaks to the audience.*

Iachimo –

All of her that is out of door most rich!

If she be furnish'd with a mind so rare,

She is alone the Arabian bird, and I

Have lost the wager. Boldness be my friend!

Arm me, audacity, from head to foot!

Actor/Actress/Iachimo (to Director) – So?

Director – So what?

Actor/Actress/Iachimo – Good?

Director – If I don't say anything it means it's ok! No one told you to stop. Let's

get moving or this will never end!

– (whispers) Whoreson dog!...

Director – I heard that!

*Laughter.*

*The cast gets ready for scene 4.*

**4. At King Cymbeline's castle.**

*Cloten plucks a guitar. Enters Imogen, who is moving to pass him by without acknowledging his presence, but Cloten blocks her way and she stops unwillingly to hear him. Cloten sings, very out of tune.*

Posthumus –

Hark, hark!

the lark at heaven's gate sings,

And Phoebus 'gins arise,

His steeds to water at those springs

On chaliced flowers that lies;

And winking Mary-buds begin

To open their golden eyes:

With everything that pretty is,

My lady sweet, arise:

Arise, arise!

*Imogen holds back her desire to laugh at him, but Cloten, unaware of the situation, puts the guitar aside and tries to move closer to Imogen.*

Cloten –

H is fortunes all lie speechless and his name

I s at last gasp: return he cannot, nor

C ontinue where he is: to shift his being

I s to exchange one misery with another,

A nd every day that comes comes to decay

A day's work in him. What shalt thou expect,



To be depend on a thing that leans?

Imogen –

You lay out too much pains

For purchasing but trouble.

Cloten –

Still, I swear I love you.

*Imogen looks at Cloten with contempt and tries to leave, but he stops her.*

Cloten –

This is no answer.

*Imogen tries to pull away; Cloten stops her.*

Imogen –

'Faith, I shall unfold equal discourtesy

To your best kindness: one of your great knowing

Should learn, being taught, forbearance!

*Imogen tries once again to pull away; Cloten stops her.*

Cloten –

To leave you in your madness, 'twere my sin:

I will not.

Imogen –

Fools cure not mad folks.

Cloten –

Do you call me fool?

Imogen –

As I am mad, I do:

If you'll be patient, I'll no more be mad;

That cures us both.

*Cloten lets Imogen go.*

Imogen –

I am much sorry, sir,

You put me to forget a lady's manners.

Cloten –

The contract you pretend with that base wretch,

O ne bred of alms and foster'd with cold dishes,

With scraps o' the court, it is no contract, none.

Imogen –

thou wert too base

To be his groom!

Cloten –

The south-fog rot him!

*Cloten pushes Imogen and she falls.*

Director – Wait a minute. You don't need to push so hard!

Actor/Actress/Cloten – Sorry.

Actor/Actress/Imogen – That's fine by me.

Director – It's not fine. This is not an MMA ring.

Actor/Actress/Imogen – He got carried away by the character. No one got hurt. It was just a little nudge, no worries. This is way more straightforward than online bullying. This is for a good cause. You should see the kind of beating I put up with on the web just because I joined the theatre group. The web space is where people go in to hurt you for real.

– And they often do.

– Yeah. People can be such cowards sometimes.

Actor/Actress/Imogen (to Actor/Actress/Cloten) – Go ahead. You can do it again.

*Actor/Actress/Cloten looks at the director.*

Director – If no one gets hurt and if everyone agrees...

Actor/Actress/Imogen (to Actor/Actress/Cloten) – Go ahead!

Imogen –

thou wert too base

To be his groom!

Cloten –

The south-fog rot him!

*Cloten pushes Imogen and she falls.*

*Cloten, recovered from his outburst, helps Imogen up, but she refuses his help.*

Imogen –

He never can meet more mischance than come

To be but named of thee. His meanest garment,

That ever hath but clipp'd his body, is dearer

In my respect than all the hairs above thee,

Were they all made such men.

Cloten –

'His garment!' Now the devil--

'His garment!

You have abused me:

'His meanest garment?'

Imogen –

Ay, I said so, sir:

If you will make't an action, call witness to't.

Cloten –

I will inform your father.

Imogen –

Your mother too!

*Imogen exits.*

Cloten –

I'll be revenged:

' His meanest garment!' Well....

*The male cast alone is preparing for scene 5.*

Director – 5 now, folks.

– We haven't decided yet who's going to do it.

Director – OK. Who'd like to do Iachimo?

*All men in the cast raise their hands. The Director picks one.*

Director – You do it!

Actor/Iachimo – Yes!

Another actor – Go for it!

Actor/Iachimo – Leave it to me... (to the *Director*) Can I pick my Imogen?

Director – You wish. Who'd like to play Imogen?

*No one volunteers.*

Actor/Iachimo – Can I pick her now?

Director – Come on, guys! Don't give me that again. Who will do Imogen?

An actress – I think one of the boys should do it.

An actor – In your dreams...

Director – (*he says the name of one of the actresses*), can you do it?

– Why me?

Director – Because you’d be good.

An actor – And how.

*The guys laugh.*

Director – Stop acting like a bunch of kids! Go, (*he says the name of the actress*), show them what the theatre is all about!

*The actors get ready for scene 5.*

**5. Imogen’s bedroom, in King Cymbeline’s castle.**

*Imogen sleeps soundly. Enters Iachimo, unnoticed.*

Iachimo –

How bravely thou becomest thy bed, fresh lily,

And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch!

But kiss; one kiss! Rubies unparagon’d,

How dearly they do’t! ‘Tis her breathing that

Perfumes the chamber thus: the flame o’ the taper

Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids,

To see the enclosed lights, now canopied

Under these windows, white and azure laced

With blue of heaven’s own tinct.

Ah, but some natural notes about her body,

To the madding of her lord.

*With much care, Iachimo moves to raise Imogen’s blouse,*

*but the Actress/Imogen doesn’t let him.*

*Iachimo tries, once again, to raise part of Imogen’s blouse,*

*but the Actress/Imogen doesn’t let him.*

Actor/Iachimo – We can't do the scene like this. She won't let me touch her blouse!

Actress/Imogen – Of course not.

Director – But then we can't do the play.

Actress/Imogen – Work something out.

Director – Work what out? Iachimo discovers a birthmark on Imogen's breast as she sleeps. He tells Posthumus that he saw the flower-shaped birthmark and Posthumus goes crazy with jealousy and decides to kill Imogen. If Iachimo doesn't discover the mark, the play ends here.

Actress/Imogen – All right, but I won't let him open my blouse in front of everybody!

Director – If that's the problem, you can turn your back to the audience and face only him.

Actor/Iachimo – I'd like that too.

*The male cast laughs.*

Actress/Imogen – You dream, man!

Director – Then he doesn't really open her blouse; he only pretends.

Actress/Imogen – That won't help. Everybody will make fun of me and my dad may very well get me out of the group!

Director – God in heaven, can it be that complicated? I guarantee that Shakespeare didn't have to put up with this kind of problem. And he did this play in the 17th century!

– That's true, but when he staged the play, there was no woman to deal with.

– No?

– No.

– What do you mean?

– They had nothing but male actors in England.

– What a waste...

– That’s right.

Director – Well remembered. Let’s have an actor play Imogen!

*The male cast reacts outraged.*

Director – (*says a name*), can you do it?

– Why me?

Director – Because you’d be good.

An actor – And how!

*They all laugh.*

Director – (*says another actor’s name*), go and... (*the whole cast say the line along with the director*) “show them what the theatre is all about!”

*They all laugh, except for the actor who will do Imogen.*

Actor/Iachimo – Am I still Iachimo?

Actress/Imogen – No, I’ll do it. May I?

Director – What do you mean?

Actress/Imogen – I’d like to understand what it’s like to be on the other side.

Director – Really?

*Actress/Imogen nods.*

Director – Ok, then? Can we start?

*The actors get ready to start scene 5 again,  
with the Actor/Imogen lying down facing the audience.*

Actress/Iachimo – You’d better turn your back to them and face me.

Actor/Imogen – But I have no problem whatsoever if they see my “mole cinquespotted,  
like the crimson drops.” Unlike little lady here, I am an actor.

– Good one!

*The male cast applauds. Actress/Imogen faces the director.*

Director – I thought we had passed this phase, guys! (*says the actor's name*) turns his back to us and on we go, for the love of Shakespeare. Let's do it. This was supposed to be just a passage scene!

*The actors get ready to start scene 5 again with the Actor/Imogen lying with his back turned to the audience.*

*Imogen sleeps soundly. Enters Iachimo unnoticed.*

Iachimo –

How bravely thou becomest thy bed, fresh lily,  
And whiter than the sheets! That I might touch!  
But kiss; one kiss! Rubies unparagon'd,  
How dearly they do't! 'Tis her breathing that  
Perfumes the chamber thus: the flame o' the taper  
Bows toward her, and would under-peep her lids,  
To see the enclosed lights, now canopied  
Under these windows, white and azure laced  
With blue of heaven's own tinct.  
Ah, but some natural notes about her body,  
To the madding of her lord.

*Instead of going for the Actor/Imogen's blouse, the Actress/Iachimo goes around from behind and goes for the Actor/Imogen's trousers.*

Iachimo –

On her left ass,  
A mole cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops.



*The Actor/Imogen leaps up.*

Actor/Imogen – Have you gone completely mad?

Actress/Iachimo – What?

Actor/Imogen – Are you going to show my ass to the audience?

Actress/Iachimo – Oh, sorry. I thought that, unlike me, you were an actor!

*The cast laughs.*

Director – Hold it!

*Director goes onstage.*

Director – This scene is supposed to be four minutes long. At the most! Can we do it or not?

– The way it is, I won't do it.

– The way she wants it, no one will do it.

Director – Enough!

*Silence.*

Director – Does anyone have any idea?

*Silence.*

Director – Call the show off, then.

*An actor raises an arm.*

Director – Seriously?

*The actor nods.*

Director – You're not joking, are you?

*The actor shakes his head.*

Director – Here it goes then.

*Director leaves the scene.*

New Actor/Iachimo – (to Actress/Imogen) Shall we do it?

Actress/Imogen – What’s the big idea?

New Actor/Iachimo – Relax... I’ll skip straight to the bracelet bit and then I’ll work something out. Don’t worry.

Actress/Imogen – Are you sure?

New Actor/Iachimo – Trust me.

*The actors reposition themselves to go on with scene 5.*

Iachimo –

... and would under-peep her lids,

To see the enclosed lights, now canopied

Under these windows, white and azure laced

With blue of heaven’s own tinct.

*Iachimo, with extreme care withdraws Imogen’s bracelet*

*and puts it around his own arm.*

Iachimo –

It is mine and will serve as witness.

*Iachimo, opens up his shirt, comes close to Imogen,*

*gets a mobile phone from his pocket and poses for a selfie.*

Iachimo –

Stronger than ever law could make: this secret

Will force him think I have pick’d the lock and ta’en

The treasure of her honour. No more...

One, two, three, now!!

*Iachimo takes the photo and smiles.*

New Actor/Iachimo – How was that?

*The whole cast applauds.*

- Very good!
- Now you're talking!
- That's what I call a false proof.
- If this *selfie* falls on the net, it is bound to dishonor any woman.
- It does make a lot more sense, doesn't it?

NewActor/Iachimo – (to Director) Did you like it?

Director – The problem is not the fact that a *selfie* appears to solve a scene of a 17th century play... The problem is to see that, for many things, we are five centuries stupider than in Shakespeare's time.

*Beat.*

Director – But we're not going to change that in one rehearsal, ok? Scene 6, let's go.

*The cast gets ready for scene 6.*

## **6. A bar, in Italy.**

*Iachimo places the ring on the table.*

Posthumus –

Sparkles this stone as it was wont? or is't not

Too dull for your good wearing?

Iachimo –

If I had lost it,

I should have lost the worth of it in gold.

I'll make a journey twice as far, to enjoy

A second night of such sweet shortness which

Was mine in Britain, for the ring is won.

*Iachimo goes for the ring. Posthumus stops him.*

Posthumus –

The stone's too hard to come by.

Iachimo –

Not a whit,

Your lady being so easy.

*Iachimo tries to take the ring again, but Posthumus stops him again.*

Posthumus –

Make not, sir,

Your loss your sport: I hope you know that we

Must not continue friends.

Iachimo –

Good sir, we must,

If you keep covenant. Had I not brought

The knowledge of your mistress home, I grant

We were to question further: but I now

Profess myself the winner of her honour,

Together with your ring; and not the wronger

Of her or you, having proceeded but

By both your wills.

Posthumus –

If you can make't apparent

That you have tasted her in bed, my hand

And ring is yours; if not, the foul opinion

You had of her pure honour gains or loses

Your sword or mine.

Iachimo –

Then, if you can...

*Iachimo shows Posthumus Imogen's bracelet.*

Iachimo –

Be pale: I beg but leave to air this jewel; see!

And now 'tis up again: it must be married

To that your diamond; I'll keep them.

*Iachimo puts the bracelet away.*

Posthumus –

Once more let me behold it: is it that

Which I left with her?

*Iachimo hands the bracelet to Posthumus and lets him examine it.*

*Posthumus, anxious, talks to himself.*

Posthumus –

It is a basilisk unto mine eye,

Kills me to look on't. Let there be no honour

Where there is beauty; truth, where semblance; love,

Where there's another man.

Iachimo –

She stripp'd it from her arm; I see her yet;

Her pretty action did outsell her gift.

Posthumus –

May be she pluck'd it off

To send it me.

It may be probable she lost it; or

Who knows if one of her women, being corrupted,

Hath stol'n it from her...

Render to me some corporal sign about her,

More evident than this; for this was stolen!

Iachimo –

If you seek

For further satisfying, under her breast--

Worthy the pressing--lies a mole, right proud

Of that most delicate lodging: by my life,

I kiss'd it; and it gave me present hunger

To feed again, though full. You do remember

This stain upon her?

Posthumus –

Ay, and it doth confirm

Another stain, as big as hell can hold,

Were there no more but it.

Iachimo –

Will you see more?

*Actor/Iachimo shows a photo on his mobile.*

Director – Let's skip the gag. This is turning into a circus!

*The actors focus on their characters again.*

Posthumus –

Another stain, as big as hell can hold,

Were there no more but it.

*Posthumus hands the ring to Iachimo.*

Posthumus –

Here, take this too.

Iachimo –

I'll be sworn –

Posthumus –

No swearing.

If you will swear you have not done't, you lie;

And I will kill thee, if thou dost deny

Thou'st made me cuckold.

Iachimo –

I'll deny nothing.

*Iachimo exits.*

*Posthumus starts writing a letter.*

Posthumus –

O, that I had her here, to tear her limb-meal!

I will go there and do't, i' the court, before

Her father. I'll do something!

*The cast gets ready for scene 7.*

### **7. In King Cymbeline's castle.**

*Enters Imogen, reading a letter. While Imogen reads,*

*Cloten appears upstage and listens to her without being seen.*

Imogen –

“Just ice, and your father's wrath, should he take me in

his dominion, could not be so cruel to me, as you, O

the dearest of creatures, would even renew me with

your eyes. Take notice that I am in Cambria, at Milford

Haven: what your own love will out of this advise you,

follow. So he wishes you all hap piness, that remains

loyal to his vow, and your, inc reasing in love,

LEONATUS POSTHUMUS.

*Imogen looks around and Cloten hides so she won't see him.*

Imogen –

How far 'tis thither. If one of mean affairs

May plod it in a week, why may not I

Glide thither in a day?

I see before me, there's no more to say,

Accessible is none but Milford way!

*Imogen exits hurriedly. Enters Cloten.*

Cloten –

She said upon a time--the

bitterness of it I now belch from my heart--that she

held the very garment of Posthumus in more respect

than my noble and natural person together with the

adornment of my qualities. With that suit upon my

back, will I ravish her: first kill him, and in her eyes;

there shall she see my valour, which will then be a

torment to her contempt. He on the ground, my speech

of insultment ended on his dead body, and when my

lust hath dined,--which, as I say, to vex her I will

execute in the clothes that she so praised, -to the court

I'll knock her back, foot her home again. She hath



despised me rejoicingly, and I'll be merry in my revenge.

Director – My idea is to make the transition to the next scene with horses and trumpets.

Actor/Cloten – How exactly?

Director – I don't know yet. Shall we improvise?

*The cast make a chaotic scene imitating horses and trumpet sounds, while they get ready for scene 8.*

### **8. Milford pier, in Cambria.**

*Posthumus is hiding, peering and waiting for Imogen's arrival.*

*Enters Cloten, dressed in Cymbeline's clothes. Posthumus tries to hide, but Cloten inspects the place and realizes someone is hiding there.*

*Cloten steps back and draws his sword.*

Cloten –

Soft! What are you

That fly me thus? some villain mountaineers?

I have heard of such. What slave art thou?

*Posthumus reveals himself.*

Posthumus –

A thing

More slavish did I ne'er than answering

A slave without a knock!

Cloten –

Thou art a robber,

A law-breaker, a villain: yield thee, thief!

Posthumus –

To who? to thee? What art thou? Have not I

An arm as big as thine? a heart as big?

Thy words, I grant, are bigger, for I wear not

My dagger in my mouth. Say what thou art,

Why I should yield to thee?

Those that I reverence those I fear, the wise:

At fools I laugh, not fear them.

*Posthumus and Cloten fight. Posthumus takes Cloten's sword and kills him. Still angry,*

*Posthumus disfigures Cloten's dead face. Posthumus realizes someone is coming and*

*hides. Enters Imogen, who sees Cloten's dead body, his face disfigured.*

Imogen –

The garments of Posthumus!

I know the shape of 's leg: this is his hand;

His foot Mercurial; his Martial thigh;

The brawns of Hercules: but his Jovial face

Murder in heaven?--How!--'Tis gone!

*In tears, Imogen picks flowers around her.*

Imogen –

I'll sweeten thy sad grave: thou shalt not lack

The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose, nor

The azured harebell, like thy veins, no, nor

The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander,

Out-sweeten'd not thy breath: the ruddock would,

With charitable bill,

bring thee all this;

Yea, and furr'd moss besides, when flowers are none,

To winter-ground thy corse.

*Imogen lays flowers around what she believes to be Posthumus' body.*

*She cries and sings a funeral song:*

Imogen –

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,

Nor the furious winter's rages;

Thou thy worldly task hast done,

Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:

Golden lads and girls all must,

As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;

Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;

Care no more to clothe and eat;

To thee the reed is as the oak:

The sceptre, learning, physic, must

All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning flash,

Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;

Fear not slander, censure rash;

Thou hast finish'd joy and moan:

All lovers young, all lovers must

Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!

Nor no witchcraft charm thee!

Ghost unlaid forbear thee!

Nothing ill come near thee!

Quiet consummation have;

And renowned be thy grave!

*Posthumus approaches. Imogen senses someone's presence and, as she turns and finds herself face to face with Posthumus, startles.*

Imogen –

Oh, my lord? my lord?

*Posthumus faces Imogen coldly, showing her the sword which he took from Cloten.*

Imogen –

What's the matter?

*Posthumus points to Cloten's body with the weapon.*

Posthumus –

This Cloten was a fool, an empty purse;

There was no money in't: not Hercules

Could have knock'd out his brains, for he had none:

Yet I not doing this, the fool had borne

My head as I do his.

The law

Protects me not: then why should be tender

To let an arrogant piece of flesh threat me,

Play judge and executioner all himself,

For we do fear the law?

With his own sword,

Which he did wave against my throat, I have ta'en

His life from him: I'll throw't into the creek

Behind the rock; and let it to the sea,

That's all I reck.

*Posthumus threatens Imogen, who tries to pull away.*

Imogen –

What is in thy mind, That makes thee stare thus? Wherefore breaks that sigh

From the inward of thee? One, but painted thus,

Would be interpreted a thing perplex'd

Beyond self-explication: put thyself

Into a havior of less fear, ere wildness

Vanquish my staid senses.

Posthumus –

the vows of women

Of no more bondage be, to where they are made,

Than they are to their virtues; which is nothing.

O, above measure false!

*Posthumus threatens Imogen, who pulls away.*

Imogen –

What art thou?

*Posthumus gets more and more furious.*

Posthumus –

I am nothing: or if not,

Nothing to be were better!

*Posthumus shows the bracelet, to Imogen's awe.*

Posthumus –

Goodly and gallant shall be false and perjured

From thy great fall!

*Posthumus raises the sword to attack Imogen, but this time she doesn't pull back.*

Imogen –

I am senseless of your wrath; a touch more rare

Subdues all pangs, all fears.

*Posthumus raises the sword again to attack Imogen, and this time*

*she once again doesn't pull back. He hesitates. Imogen raises the hand with which*

*Posthumus holds the sword against her own chest.*

Imogen –

I draw the sword myself: take it, and hit

The innocent mansion of my love, my heart;

Fear not; 'tis empty of all things but grief.

*Imogen pushes the sword against her chest, but Posthumus pulls it away.*

Imogen –

Thou mayst be valiant in a better cause;

But now thou seem'st a coward.

Come, fellow, be thou honest:

what a strange infection

Is fall'n into thy ear!

False to thy bed! What is it to be false?

To lie in watch there and to think on thee?

To weep 'twixt clock and clock? if sleep charge nature,

To break it with a fearful dream of thee

And cry myself awake? false to thy bed, is it?

I have tired myself, and for two nights together

Have made the ground my bed. I should be sick,

But that my resolution helped me.

I false? Thy conscience witness!!

*Posthumus drops the sword.*

Posthumus –

Damn'd Giácomo

That false Italian,

A s poisonous-tongued as handed, hath prevail'd

On my too ready hearing.

*Posthumus kicks the sword away.*

Posthumus –

Hence, vile instrument!

Thou shalt not damn my hand!

*Posthumus opens his arms to Imogen.*

Posthumus –

O sweetest, fairest lily!

My queen! my mistress!

*Imogen runs into Posthumus's arms.*

Director – Hold it!

*The scene is interrupted.*

Actor/Actress/Posthumus – Did I do anything wrong?

Director – No.

Actor/Actress/Imogen – Was it me, then?

Director – No. That's not it... It's just that we have changed so much in the play

that I don't know if we should go on the way Shakespeare intended, with Imogen forgiving Posthumus after all. What do you think?

*Here, not in a very orderly manner, the cast expresses their opinions about the possible endings to the play, debating especially, whether Imogen should forgive the man who, moved by passion, distrusted her and submitted her to a shameful situation and who now turns against her with violence.*

Director (to the audience) – How about you?

*Director takes the debate to the audience.*

*After listening to their opinions, he looks pensive.*

Actor/Actress/Imogen – I have an idea... I'll do the ending the way I want, can I?

Director – But will it still be Shakespeare?

Actor/Actress/Imogen – Every word I say will be straight from the play. I'll just change the order.

Director – Really?

*Actor/Actress/Imogen nods.*

Actor/Actress/Posthumus – Cool. Then I'll improvise too. And we'll see what happens.

Director – Wonderful. Let's do it.

*The cast gets ready to get back into the scene.*

Posthumus –

Hence, vile instrument!

Thou shalt not damn my hand!

*Posthumus opens his arms to Imogen.*

Posthumus –

O sweetest, fairest lily!



My queen! my mistress!

*Posthumus opens his arms to Imogen, but she turns away from him.*

*Posthumus comes to her, but Imogen shuns him.*

Imogen –

What shall thou need to draw thy sword? thy words

Have cut my throat already.

Posthumus –

O lady, weep no more, lest I give cause

To be suspected of more tenderness

Than doth become a man.

Imogen –

Talk thy tongue weary; speak

I have heard I am a strumpet; and mine ear

Therein false struck, can take no greater wound,

Nor tent to bottom that. But speak...

Posthumus –

I will remain

The loyal'st husband that did and'er plight troth.

Imogen –

Men's vows are women's traitors! All good seeming,

By thy revolt, O husband, shall be thought

Put on for villany; not born where't grows,

But worn a bait for ladies!

*Imogen starts to leave, Posthumus tries -to stop her,*

*but she shakes him off and exits. Devastated, Posthumus speaks to the audience.*

Posthumus –

Love's reason's without reason:

The bird is dead

That we have made so much on. I had rather

Have skipp'd from sixteen years of age to sixty,

To have turn'd my leaping-time into a crutch,

Than have seen this.

No, 'tis slander, whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue outvenoms

all the worms of Nile, whose breath rides on the posting winds and doth belie all

corners of the world: kings, queens and states, maids, matrons, nay, the secrets

of the grave. this viperous slander enters.

*Posthumus kneels before Cloten's dead body and sings a funeral song which, slowly, the entire cast joins in to.*

Posthumus and Cast

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,

Nor the furious winter's rages;

Thou thy worldly task hast done,

Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages:

Golden lads and girls all must,

As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;

Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;

Care no more to clothe and eat;

To thee the reed is as the oak:

The sceptre, learning, physic, must

All follow this, and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning flash,

Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;

Fear not slander, censure rash;

Thou hast finish'd joy and moan:

All lovers young, all lovers must

Consign to thee, and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!

Nor no witchcraft charm thee!

Ghost unlaid forbear thee!

Nothing ill come near thee!

Quiet consummation have;

And renowned be thy grave!

*From an audience seat, the Director applauds.*

Director – Very good, guys. That will be the end of the play. Excellent!

– How about the end of this rehearsal?

Director – A rehearsal is a rehearsal. It ends and that's it. It needs no ending.

– I think this one will.

Director – Why?

*The cast points to the audience.*

Director – Ah...

Epilogue

*The Director turns to the audience and starts a speech, which, slowly, will be joined by the voices of the entire cast as a chorus:*

Director and the Actors

Thus farre with rough, and all-unable Pen,  
Our bending Shakespeare hath pursu'd the Story,  
Of King Cymbeline's suffering daughter,  
Mangling by starts the full course of her glory.  
The plot in time have we transformed  
And the end itself did we break with Sword;  
As you attend our play we feel no shame  
That its essence remains the same.  
The story shown here of good old times  
tells a tale of intrigue and bold little lies.  
Love today hath little room for slander,  
But for those who felt the pain and the anger  
Which oft our Stage hath shown; for their sake,  
In your faire minds let this acceptance take.  
*Everyone bows to the public.*

**The end.**